

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend page 7, paragraph 4, to read as follows:

In another ~~embodiment~~ embodiment of the present invention, a laser system includes an enclosure with an interior volume and an interior surface area. The enclosure is adaptable to be substantially sealed against an external atmosphere. A laser is positioned in the interior ~~volume~~ volume. An optical element is disposed within the interior volume. The optical element contains material with at least one physical characteristic that varies with exposure to at least one constituent of the external atmosphere. A sink material is positioned in the interior volume. The sink material has a characteristic of spontaneously absorbing of at least one gas species.

Please amend page 8, paragraph 8 to page 9, paragraph 1, as follows:

Figure 1 illustrates an embodiment of an optics housing 100 containing a sensitive optical element 40 disposed within enclosure 10, defining an interior volume 20, and adaptable to be substantially sealed against external atmosphere 30. Also shown in Figure 1 are container 50 containing sink material 80. The container 50 has gas-permeable surface 60, which preferably comprises most of the available surface in contact with the interior volume 20 of the enclosure 10. According to the embodiment of Figure 1, the container 50 is coupled to the housing so as to form a protuberance 70 that extends into interior volume 20. The seal separating interior volume 20 from external atmosphere 30 may be effective against both positive and negative (gauge) pressure, preferably using elastomer seals, but a pressure tight seal is not necessary. The enclosure may be substantially sealed, for example, by virtue of the standard machining tolerances of parts fastened together by bolts or other means. This type of seal, while not pressure tight, is sufficient to prevent saturation of sink material 80 by extended exposure to the external atmosphere. In addition, windows 12 and 12 A may be provided on opposite sides of the enclosure through which light at one or more wavelength may enter. For example, if the housing 100 comprises a harmonic ~~generation~~ generation module light at one wavelength may enter through port 12 transparent to that wavelength, and upon passage through the element 40 be converted into light at a second, usually shorter wavelength, prior to exiting through window 12A, which is therefore selected and configured to be transparent at least at that second wavelength. More complex enclosures, including

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additional ports and windows sealed into the walls of the enclosure all fall under the scope of the present invention.

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Please amend page 14, lines 21-30, as follows:

Figure 6 shows yet another embodiment of the system and method of the invention wherein the optical housing 600 comprises a laser system contained within enclosure 610. The laser system is indicated generically as comprising gain material 648, Q-Switch 640 contained within cell 645 and suitable feedback optics 620 and 622. In this case the Q-Switch material may comprise a sensitive optical material. In one common example, the laser 600 is a solid state laser such as erbium-doped YAG having a beam 630 emitting radiation near 3 mm, a wavelength known to be strongly absorbed by water. This can result in damage to the coated surfaces of a sensitive electro-optic crystal such as LiNbO₃. The sink material 680 contained in container 650 behind gas-permeable surface 660 allows the rapid removal of humidity, promoting long life operation of this type of laser.